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ABSTRACT

This document presents contract grading as a system of evaluation for speech communication courses at the high school or college level. Contract grading can provide the means to reduce the element of threat that impedes effective interpersonal communication between teacher and student. Contract grading is a business like arrangement whereby the instructor defines the performance for each grade to be earned and the student identifies the grade to which he or she will work. Together they sign a contract which commits the instructor to award the grade if the student performs at the specified level. This system of grading is a means to the goal of achieving a classroom climate conducive to supportive interaction and is based on the premise that instruction will be systematically designed and executed. In this document, the first section is theoretical and deals with the advantages and disadvantages of the system. The second, practical section contains several model contracts which may be used at the secondary and college levels. (DF)

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THEORY & RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

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Contract Grading in Speech Communication Courses

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Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current significant information and lists this information in its reference publications.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NIE has directed the separate ERIC clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities information analysis papers in specific areas.

In addition, as with all federal educational information efforts, ERIC has as one of its primary goals bridging the gap between educational theory and actual classroom practices. One method of achieving that goal is the development by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) of a series of sharply focused booklets based on concrete educational needs. Each booklet provides teachers with the best educational theory and/or research on a limited topic. It also presents descriptions of classroom activities which are related to the described theory and assists the teacher in putting this theory into practice.

This idea is not unique. Several educational journals and many commercial textbooks provide teachers with similar aids. The ERIC/RCS booklets are unusual in their sharp focus on an educational need and their blend of sound academic theory with tested classroom practices. And they have been developed because of the increasing requests from teachers to provide this kind of service.

Topics for these booklets are recommended by the ERIC/RCS National Advisory Committee. Suggestions for topics to be considered by the Committee should be directed to the Clearinghouse.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

A Note from the Authors

This book has been prepared primarily from materials used in secondary school and college courses taught by the authors, as well as from material presented in a short course taught by the authors at the 1976 Speech Communication Association Convention in San Francisco.

Theory

Components and Types of Contracts

If teaching is communicating, and if evaluation is a form of feedback, then we need to bring our grading procedures in line with the communication principles we teach. It is desirable that we seek to create a climate conducive to supportive interaction, a climate without defense-arousing communication; we therefore need to create a grading system consistent with our goal.

Contract grading can provide a viable means of reducing the element of threat that impedes effective interpersonal communication between teacher and student. Contract grading as explained by Ann Harvey is a

> . . . businesslike arrangement whereby the instructor defines the performance for each grade. The student then identifies the performance level to which he will work and signs a contract in which the instructor is committed to awarding this predetermined grade if the student attains the appropriate performance level.[1]

Although this definition explains the typical contract, students may also design their own contracts after they have had experience using them. In either case, the approach to contract grading presented here is based on the premise that instruction should be systematically designed and executed. Behavioral objectives with criterion-referenced evaluations should be used in all contracts. *Criterion-referenced evaluation* refers to assessing student work by measuring it against a set of behaviors or minimum levels of achievement that are specified before the student begins working. That is, student performance is measured against a criterion rather than in comparison with the performance of other students (norm-referenced evaluation).

Contracts designed for an entire course are typically used on the

college level in quarter or semester courses. However, contracts that are to be completed in shorter time periods and cover less material (for example, a unit) may also be used. Secondary level courses especially lend themselves to division into units, with grades contracted on a unit-by-unit basis. Using contracts for units of work offers flexibility for teachers as well as for students. With a unit contract, instructors can try out contracting for shorter time periods and adjust the number and/or difficulty of assignments for each unit. Some teachers may find it advisable to introduce the contract after using an introductory unit with norm-referenced grading and to utilize the contract unit-by-unit rather than for an entire course. Withholding the contract until the second unit gives the teacher time to analyze the specific needs and abilities of the students. This observation period helps to insure writing objectives and criteria that are challenging, yet reasonable, for the intended class and gives the opportunity to modify an existing contract to meet students' needs. Withholding the contract until the second unit also allows the teacher to present it at an opportune time and to first mitigate any myths or fears about the contract system.

Postponing use of a contract is also advantageous for students. Instead of making a decision about a semester grade at the beginning of the term, students can wait until they are familiar with class materials and expectations and thus are better equipped to set more realistic goals for themselves.

Students appreciate the contract by unit and often express rationales for their decisions. For example, one girl said:

> I'm playing in the basketball finals and the coach has scheduled many practices in the next two weeks. I don't have the time to spend for the "A," so I'll contract for a "B" now. I will try for the "A" next unit when this is all over.

No teacher likes to feel that his or her class takes a secondary position to a sport, extracurricular club, job, or another class; however, this student evaluated her time, determined priorities, and set what she considered to be a realistic goal. If she had been forced to declare a grade for the term, the basketball interference might have caused her additional frustration or made her unable to fulfill all requirements.

Whether the contract is for a course or a unit, it must contain certain components to be effective. According to James Stewart and Jack Shank, the specific components of the contract should include "the learning objective, the conditions or methods to be employed in completing it, specific responsibilities of the student, identification of the procedural steps or tasks included in the learning activity, provisions for applying and demonstrating skills or content learned, and the methods that will be employed to evaluate the mutually developed contract."[2] In addition, the time limit in which the contract must be met should be indicated. All these components are specified by the teacher and then negotiated with

the student. Contracts may be uniform, with grade levels defined for a whole class, or they may be agreed upon individually, even to the extent that each student writes his or her own contract.

In the following contract on informative speaking given to high school students, note the inclusion of these specific components: an overview of contract grading, objectives, purpose of the assignment, specific requirements of each grade to be achieved, and a summary of the requirements.

The Informative Speech Contract

We will be using *contract grading* for the unit on informative speaking. A grade contract is an agreement between student and teacher that specifies the work the student will do and the grade he or she can expect if the work is satisfactory. Contract grading is different because you state the grade you will work for *before* you prepare and speak. The requirements differ for each grade.

Contract grading has many advantages for you:

1. You know what is expected for each grade.
2. You can work for the grade you feel capable of achieving.
3. You are evaluated objectively—that is, whether or not you successfully completed all the steps. Your work is not compared with others.
4. If you do not fulfill all requirements, you have the option of redoing any work until it is satisfactory. Remember that all speeches must be prepared on the due date to receive any credit.

After reviewing the requirements for each grade, please hand in a sheet of paper with your name and the grade you would like to contract for. Contract due: _____ .

Objectives

1. To improve skills in library research
2. To improve skills in organizing ideas
3. To gain insight into audience analysis and adaptation as a part of public speaking
4. To improve skills in communicating with a large group
5. To improve skills as listener/evaluator

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. research, organize and deliver an informative speech adapted to your specific audience.
2. effectively evaluate another speaker's presentation.

Purpose

In this speech you should present the listener with new information or a new understanding about old information. Prepare an informative

speech to be delivered on: _____(date)_____ .

1. Analyze your audience.
2. Select a topic that interests you *and* will interest your audience. (Reread information on choosing and limiting a subject.) You may select a topic you already know something about–*if* you gather new and varied information; *or*, you may try a topic you are interested in but know little about. (Here is a chance for research skills to pay off!)
3. Write a thesis statement.
4. Research your idea. (The contract should help clarify requirements.)
5. Build your speech.
   - Conduct an audience poll ("A" contracts only).
   - Outline your ideas (put them in a specific pattern of organization).
   - Use a variety of support and adapt to your audience.
6. Write an introduction and conclusion.
7. Time limit: Minimum 10 minutes.

Contract for Informative Speech

To receive a "C" on this speech you must:

1. Analyze your audience.
2. Select an appropriate informative topic and narrow it.
3. Write a correct thesis statement.
4. Research your idea, using at least three different library resources.
5. Clearly outline ideas into a pattern of organization.
6. Use a variety of support (at least 4 types) including an adapted statistic.
7. Write note cards, limiting them to one main idea per card. (Remember: you are not allowed to write out the speech word for word.)
8. Write an introduction and conclusion.
9. Write a bibliography (prepared by the criteria in your book).
10. Meet any deadlines for materials.
11. Be prepared for due date.
12. Meet minimum time limit.
13. Use library time efficiently!

To receive a "B" on this speech you must:

1. Complete all requirements for a "C."
2. Hand in a written audience analysis.
3. Use at least five different library resources including reference materials.

4. Use a visual aid diagram for your statistic, constructed correctly according to visual aid criteria in the book.
5. Adapt some of your support to the audience's experiential world at least four times in your speech.
6. Your introduction and conclusion should relate to your specific audience.

To receive an "A" on this speech you must:

1. Complete the requirements for a "B."
2. Write an audience poll for the class and incorporate the information from the results in your speech. Also hand in a summary of your information.
3. Research work should reflect advanced skills using varied types. Include 2 more library sources (C=3 + B=2 + A=2 = 7 sources).
4. Use visual aids effectively at least three times. (Step 4 in "B" level plus two more.)
5. Consistently adapt your information and evidence to your audience's experiential world. Work for impact. This should be done at least eight times in the speech.
6. The introduction should relate to your audience's experiences and get their attention.
7. The conclusion should relate to your audience and leave the audience with an important point to remember.

Important:

1. Someone not fulfilling the criteria for a grade of "C" will receive a "D."
2. Anyone not fulfilling step # 11 will get an "E."
3. Any unexcused absences during performances will drop your grade one letter.

Although the summary checklist that follows is not an established component of a contract, it can provide visual clarification of the requirements. The original intent was to outline the requirements in a simple chart for any student who might be intimidated by the unfamiliar contract format. Students may use it as a supplement to the contract and as a final checklist, marking the steps as they complete them.

It is important for contract requirements to be as specific as possible, with the criteria for evaluation identified. If the teacher has not given standards or written the requirements clearly, a student may interpret requirements such as "use two visual aids" literally and bring in two small posters overloaded with fine print. Although the visual aids are ineffective, the student *has* fulfilled the requirements. If the teacher has presented the students with standards for making visual aids ("to make an

Summary of "A," "B," and "C" Speech Requirements

Requirements	C	B	A
1. Analyze audience	X	X	X
2. Hand in written audience analysis		X	X
3. Prepare and give an audience poll and include information in speech			X
4. Select an appropriate topic and narrow	X	X	X
5. Write a correct thesis statement	X	X	X
6. Research your idea • using at least 3 sources	X		
• using at least 5 sources (include references)		X	
• using at least 7 sources (include references)			X
7. Clearly outline ideas	X	X	X
8. Use a variety of support • at least 4 types, including 1 adapted statistic	X	X	X
9. Use visual aids • use a visual aid for a statistic		X	
• use 3 visual aids, 1 for statistic			X
10. Adapt your support to your audience • at least 1 time	X		
• at least 4 times		X	
• at least 8 times			X
11. Correctly write note cards (for delivery)	X	X	X
12. Write an introduction and conclusion (quality difference between grades)	X	X	X
13. Write a bibliography	X	X	X
14. Prepare for the due date	X	X	X
15. Meet minimum time requirement	X	X	X
16. Use library time efficiently	X	X	X

effective visual aid, include the following . . . ") and written the requirements to reflect the standards ("use two visual aids reflecting the standards described in the class handout"), no discrepancies should ensue.

Contract Evaluation

The teacher should state a requirement in the contract for each student behavior to be evaluated, including such examples as "using library time efficiently." Students will accept all the requirements if the teacher remains consistent. Therefore, the teacher should carefully decide what expectations to include and stick with them! If it becomes apparent that other requirements should have been included, the teacher should note them as a modification for the next contract. The teacher should avoid adding steps orally or holding students accountable for something that is felt to be "common sense." Remember to respect contracts as business agreements between teacher and student.

Developing a contract evaluation form is also recommended. (See sample evaluation form.) This feedback sheet includes the established criteria, assuring that the teacher will remain consistent in his or her assessment of each student. The teacher is able to check off certain content requirements while the student is speaking. Each time a different support is presented, for instance, the teacher can circle the type used. After the oral presentation, the teacher can assess the inclusiveness of the written work accompanying the speech and offer the student an objective appraisal the next day. If the student fails to meet specific requirements, the procedures to be followed in completing the assignment are indicated. It is suggested that the student be given a deadline for make-up work. If the deficient areas are not made up, the student may be assigned the grade earned on the basis of the requirements fulfilled—or may be given a "no pass," depending on the nature of the contract.

Different types of contracts may be developed to suit the nature of the course content, the methods of instruction, and the students' characteristics. Three types of contracts are illustrated in the Practice section of this book. The first type, the "Scout Handbook System" suggested by Jo Sprague, identifies specific tasks that must be completed and provides a list of optional tasks from which the student must select a predetermined number, based on the grade contracted for.[3] For example, a contract may read: for a "C," do the starred activities and any three additional ones; for a "B," any six additional activities; for an "A," any nine additional ones. The second type of contract, based on point systems elaborated by Thomas King and Brian Holleran, requires the student to accumulate a predetermined number of points to receive a specific grade.[4] For example, a student must accumulate 100 points for a "C," 200 points for a "B," 300 points for an "A." In this system, the student is allowed to select the grade level for which he or she wishes to strive and to choose

Name: _____

Contract Evaluation

____ Note cards (main idea only)
____ Bibliography (in proper form)
____ Audience analysis (for contracts "A" and "B")
____ Audience poll and results (for contract "A" only)
____ Sources
C = 3
B = 5 with reference materials
A = 7 and reflects advanced research skills
____ Clearly organized material
____ Support: 4 types, with 1 interpreted statistic.
Choose from fact, explanation, story, comparison/contrast, example, quotation, or visual aid statistic.
____ Visual aids (prepared by criteria in organizing ideas)
B = 1 visual aid for statistic
A = 3 visual aids, 1 for statistic
____ Audience adaptation (to their experiential world)
C = at least 1 time
B = at least 4 times
A = at least 8 times
____ Introduction (appropriate for grade contract)
____ Conclusion (appropriate for grade contract)
____ Library time used efficiently
____ Met minimum time requirement of 10 minutes

Comments:

Contract completed:

Yes

No, did not successfully complete the following:

_____

_____

Grade received

from a variety of activities (each worth a specified number of points) that are to be completed to meet the grade requirement.

A common complaint spoken against contract grading systems is that higher grades are based on the quantity of work, not the quality. The third type of contract, proposed by David Stern, is designed so that "C" level students achieve tasks on the lower cognitive levels of knowledge, comprehension, and application; "B" level students accomplish tasks requiring "C" level cognitions plus analysis; and "A" level students achieve all cognitive levels including those reached by "C" and "B" level students plus synthesis and evaluation.[5] In this manner, the quality of the contracts for each grade level is controlled; higher levels of learning, as defined in Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning,[6] are demanded for higher grades.

Because the components of contracts must be clearly defined, behavioral objectives and criterion-referenced measures are desirable. Use of contracts makes it easier for the teacher to determine, in a less subjective manner, whether or not the student has successfully completed the behavioral objectives. Emphasis is given to achievement of competency rather than grades, since any unsatisfactory assignments are to be redone until they are acceptable. In the contract-grading method, students who fulfill the contract are rewarded with the grades they negotiated for initially. If the work is unsatisfactory or does not fulfill the contract, it is returned, and the student is allowed to improve upon it.

By placing the student and the teacher in a business arrangement in which both parties negotiate for the contract they feel to be best, the contract system encourages a cooperative relationship between student and teacher. Since both participants have an agreement they must maintain, control of the relationship is more equally shared. In a contract grading system, as Stewart and Shank indicated, "Student and teacher are working to beat the evaluative device. It is NOT the student striving to pass the teachers' test."[7] Therefore, the very nature of the contract arrangement allows for supportive communication because it implements climates of greater equality, provisionalism, description, objectivity, personal involvement, and problem orientation.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Contract Grading

Advantages

Students at both the secondary and college levels most often cite "knowledge of what was to be done for the entire term" and "knowledge of the exact criteria for grading" as definite advantages of contract grading. Parents of secondary school students have also expressed enthusiasm for contracts because they understand what work is expected of their sons and daughters. This knowledge allows students to work

systematically toward goals that can be set realistically by them and therefore often provides students the opportunity to produce at a higher level than if no goal had been set.

Students value what they want to learn. This is especially true if students write their own contracts or choose options meaningful to them. The writing of a contract further provides an opportunity for students and teachers to have conferences to discuss these options. Conferences and contract negotiations allow for both students and teachers to become actively involved in the learning process and to mutually agree upon experiences that will benefit the students. Students share responsibility with the teacher for evaluation and learning, which in turn gives students more control over the course's outcome and their involvement in it. This opportunity to negotiate allows students to decide the grade they want to achieve.

Contract grading requires feedback from the teacher, giving students an opportunity to redo work and to improve performances. In this process, learning is reinforced. When the feedback confirms what students have done, they may be motivated to work toward the next level of competency.

Contract grading as implemented by criterion-referenced measurement provides for individualized instruction. The contract allows for flexibility because all students do not have to be exposed to the same content at the same time in the same manner. This process of learning helps generate a more healthy self-concept on the part of the student. Each student is reinforced by what he or she has accomplished and does not become discouraged by being compared with others through norm-referenced measurement. Through this process, which allows students to assess their capabilities more realistically and to accomplish assignments within their limitations, grade competition among students is reduced.

As predictability of the grading procedure increases, students' anxieties caused by teacher evaluation of their work decreases. Specifying the criteria by which the work will be evaluated provides students, in advance, with the information necessary to determine if they have successfully fulfilled the grade standard for which they contracted. The students' work either has or has not met the standard. If it has not, specific explanation of what each student can do to improve should be stated. Thus, student anxiety is reduced by advance knowledge of evaluating criteria and knowledge that a second opportunity to meet the grade standard exists.

Carl Rogers has stated that evaluation can be a communication barrier. Contract grading reduces this communication barrier, which is imposed by roles within the system requiring evaluation of one by the other. Communication between students and teachers becomes open, honest, and supportive rather than defense-arousing. Contract grading

provides for a circular model of communication in which both parties negotiate for a contract that best fulfills the student's needs. A sense of cooperation between students and teachers enhances their relationship, thereby providing an effective model of communication.

Disadvantages

A problem frequently discussed is the increased amount of the teacher's time that contract grading takes as compared with traditional forms of grading. Initially, behavioral objectives must be written for the contract. These objectives may have to be reevaluated and adjusted to be more or less difficult after using the contract for the first time. In addition, depending on the contract, conferences may be needed between students and the teacher to assess students' capabilities, to negotiate grade levels to be achieved, and to reassess students' fulfillment of contracts throughout the term.

A second major problem with contract grading is that some students are not able to fulfill the requirements within the time period; students often allow work to pile up until the end of the semester. To eliminate this problem, deadlines should be set at the beginning of the semester and rewards should be given for meeting them. If the students are not fulfilling their contracts because of scholastic reasons or conflicting time schedules, renegotiation of contract for a lower grade should be considered. Incomplete contracts should occur only because of unfinished work, rather than unsatisfactory work. If the teacher sees that the majority of students are unable to complete the contract within the allotted time, a more realistic contract should be constructed.

Another complaint, reported by students on both the secondary school and college levels, involves responsibility for the grade. These students complained that in this system they could not blame the teacher for their grade, but instead had to take responsibility themselves for the grade they received.

Since grades are not averaged, students cannot compensate for their weak areas by doing better in another area. An example cited by a teacher was that some of her students found chapters in the textbook confusing and difficult to understand. Several students could not pass one chapter quiz and, being under contract, could not use their perfect scores on other chapters to compensate for the difficult chapter. Since contract grading is based on the concept of totaling, not averaging, students are required to demonstrate minimum competencies on each designated assignment within their contracts. In the previous example, under the contract system, the student would have to achieve the minimum acceptable score on each quiz to receive the desired grade.

As students obtain feedback on their performances during the semester and make more realistic appraisals of their competencies, the

question arises, "Should students be allowed to renegotiate for grades higher or lower than those for which they originally contracted?"

On the one hand, educators who believe contract grading simulates the business world argue that students should not be allowed to renegotiate their contracted grade, because in the business world penalties must be paid for unfulfilled contracts. Educators with this view of contract grading believe that students should receive a failing grade if contracts are unfulfilled.

On the other hand, some educators believe that students should be allowed to renegotiate their contracts to receive a grade reflective of the work they can accomplish, given their personal abilities and time limitations. This view helps students to become more realistic in assessing their capabilities and does not subject them to unwarranted failure. To overcome the problems of an assignment not handed in by the deadline or a reworked assignment that still does not meet the specified criteria, a conference is often needed. The teacher and student could then determine why the contract is not being fulfilled, if the contract should be renegotiated, and what could be done to ensure successful completion of the next contract. Either of these approaches to dealing with unsatisfied contracts has negative ramifications for the teacher and student, thus making it crucial for the teacher to specify clearly in the contract whether or not renegotiation will be permissible. Some teachers allow their classes to determine which of these procedures will be followed.

Determining how much work is adequate for a grade and what is critical to learn may also become a problem in contract grading. Both the adequacy of the work required and what is critical to learn depend upon the stated behavioral objectives as determined by the teacher. Extremely important to the issue is that the students not be limited to learning just what is in the contract. If students consistently achieve the high levels of the contract or if the assignments within the contract are consistently labeled unchallenging, the teacher should rework the contract to more accurately match the students' capabilities. If a teacher preassesses select students as superior or as having special needs, totally individualized contracts between the student and teacher can be written. Obviously, time precludes the writing of individualized contracts for a large number of students.

Recommendations to Teachers

The adoption of contract grading systems has three implications for secondary school and college teachers. If a department's service courses were to move toward contingency contracting, a teacher might expect the following changes: (1) there would be fewer student complaints about

ambiguous or capricious grading practices; (2) faculty within the department would be better able to describe the content and outcomes of their instruction, thus facilitating curricular review, reduction of overlap among courses, and fulfillment of gaps in the curriculum; and (3) the specification of performance criteria would make it easier for teachers to communicate course content to higher administration, outside agencies, potential students, and the public. In the age of accountability it is tremendously desirable for teachers to be able to say "Let me give you an example of exactly what students accomplish in one of our courses." A further implication is that faculty who are making the transition to contract grading deserve administrative support, at best through a reduced course load for curricular development, at least through clerical support, released time for departmental duties, and encouragement.

By far the most significant administrative implication of a change to contract grading is the effect on grade distribution. The mastery approach to learning on which contract grading is based assumes that every student can master the content of a course given a reasonable length of time and good instructional procedures.[8] Summarizing the results of forty major studies carried out under actual instructional conditions, Block indicates that "in general, three-fourths of the students learning under mastery conditions achieved the same high standards of the top one-fourth learning under conventional group-based instructional conditions. In studies where a strategy has been refined and replicated, 90 percent of the mastery learning students achieved as well as the top 20 percent of the non-mastery students."[9]

Most teachers who experiment with contract grading find that, although they maintain or even raise their standards, their grade distributions are positively skewed.[10] The normal curve—or its informal variations more frequently used—are logically incompatible with contract grading. The teacher makes an ethically binding contract with each student to award the grade that is worked toward and consequently earned. The performance of classmates is irrelevant to the grade that a student receives. (In a long range sense, of course, teachers' experiences with comparable classes help to determine their standards of what level of achievement is average, good, or excellent for students in general. Once those standards are formalized into a contract, though, there is no effort to compare students' performance within a given class.) An excellent discussion of criterion-referenced versus norm-referenced evaluation is provided by Smythe, Kibler and Hutchings.[11] Secondary school and college teachers need to be aware of the different assumptions of these two approaches. Some faculty members will compare a student's performance to that of his or her classmates. Some will compare that student's performance to a pre-established criterion. It's the age-old question: Does "C" mean average or does "C" mean acceptable?

Advocates of contract grading and the mastery approach to instruction find that the criterion-referenced system (the "'C' means acceptable" position) is the most persuasive. The system of evaluation is inherently linked to a philosophy of instruction that, due to the clarity of performance criteria, is highly motivating. If, as the research cited suggests, most students do very well under this system, then they ought to be rewarded. No teacher should apologize for a positively skewed grade distribution if those grades reflect excellent student performance. On the contrary, accountability movements in elementary and secondary education seek to tie effectiveness to measurable student progress.

In recent years there has been tremendous concern about grade inflation.[12] The very term suggests that the value of a grade lies in its scarcity. Extending the economic metaphor to its logical extreme, some have proposed that a student's transcript carry beside each grade the mean of all grades awarded in that course - a type of rate of exchange table. We find chilling the uncritical analysis of the popular media and far too many educators that the grade inflation phenomenon necessarily reflects a lowering of education standards or an attempt by professors to buy student approval. The grade inflation issue is complex and deserves full research and analysis. Until the phenomenon is understood, however, administrators must defend their faculty members from unfair attack. The very teachers who take the greatest care to specify their evaluation criteria and who opt for criterion-based evaluation must not be punished for "low standards" while colleagues who casually assign a normal distribution of subjective grades are rewarded. It is difficult to prove, but many comments from teachers of both secondary school and college level students provide substantial anecdotal evidence to confirm the suspicion that a high grade distribution has become a negative factor in retention, tenure, and promotion deliberations. Most dangerously, this factor is probably considered above the departmental level and never explicitly discussed at the time where a candidate can respond. Despite the evidence that teacher effectiveness ratings are not linked to the grades a teacher gives,[13] the myth persists that high ratings can be discounted if it appears that a teacher has "bought" popularity by grading "easily." It is important that speech communication teachers: (1) become conversant with the theory of criterion-referenced instruction and with the evidence on how grading behavior relates to teaching effectiveness; (2) make every effort to see that no subtle peer pressures are brought to bear on faculty members who elect criterion-referenced evaluation systems; and (3) ensure that positively skewed grade distributions *resulting from sound and explicitly defended pedagogical positions* are never used against faculty in any personnel action at any level.

Practice

Sample Contracts

Grade-Option-Only Contract

The grade-option-only contract is probably the most basic type of contract, because the teacher identifies the requirements for each grade and the student selects the grade he or she wishes to work toward.

Consider the following sample grade-option-only contract and answer the following questions.

Sample Grade-Option-Only Contract for a Group Discussion Unit

(This is not a model unit, but only a sample of the format of a grade-option-only contract.)

To receive a "C" on this unit you must:

1. participate in a problem-solving group discussion that is presented before the class on a topic of the group's choice. You must orally participate in the discussion at least ten times and must contribute at least three relevant articles or interview reports to the research information of the group.
2. keep a journal in which you record at least three one-page entries regarding your role in the group, the process the group went through to solve the problem and reach a decision, the leadership of the group, and so on.
3. receive a "C" or higher on a comprehensive examination that covers the group discussion unit.

To receive a "B" on this unit you must:

1. complete the requirements for a "C."

2. observe a group's communication (for example, another group in class, your family, or the student council) and diagram the communication patterns among the participants. Identify at least three roles that people played and analyze the effect of each on the group's interaction. Evaluate the group's effectiveness in reaching their goal. Discuss a minimum of three ways in which the communication of the group could have been improved.
3. receive a "B" or higher on a comprehensive examination that covers the group discussion unit.

To receive an "A" on this unit you must:

1. complete the requirements for a "B."
2. actively take on the position of leader in either the group you are working with in class, or an outside group to which you belong. In a minimum of three pages write an account of (1) how you fulfill that role, (2) your feelings about being a leader, (3) how you obtained that position, (4) what you can do to improve upon your enactment of that role, and (5) the type of feedback you receive from the group members about how you fulfilled that role.

Questions for your consideration:

1. To create such a grade-option-only contract, what would you have to know about your students? What preassessment of their entry skills would you need to know? How would your students cope with the long-range goal setting required by this contract?
2. What could you do to re-adjust the contract if you discovered that it required more than students were able to accomplish in order to reach the desired grade levels in the time allotted?
3. How comfortable would you be with implementing a grade-option-only contract for a unit? A course? A week or class period worth of activities?
4. What particular subjects or units that you teach best lend themselves to a grade-option-only contract?
5. In analyzing the sample grade-option-only contract, can you identify the different levels of learning (knowledge, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) that are required to receive each of the grades? Is it apparent that a student who receives an "A" must demonstrate skills on all levels of learning?

Scout Handbook System Contract

The Scout Handbook contract provides flexibility for students, yet requires basic assignments to be completed by all. It is possible to modify such a contract by requiring students working for higher grades to complete a certain number of activities on higher levels of cognitive skills (that is, evaluation, synthesis, and analysis).

Consider the following sample Scout Handbook contract and answer the related questions.

Sample Scout Handbook Contract
for a Unit on Parliamentary Procedure

(This is not a model unit, but only a sample
of the format of a Scout Handbook contract.)

For a grade of "D" on this unit, you must do the three starred activities.

For a grade of "C" on this unit, you must do the three starred activities and any two others.

For a grade of "B" on this unit, you must do the three starred activities and any four others.

For a grade of "A" on this unit, you must do the three starred activities and any six others.

*1. Pass the quiz on Roberts Rules of Order (two chances).
*2. Participate actively in all meetings of the class organization, observing the basic rules of parliamentary procedure and decorum.
*3. Serve on a special or standing committee of our class organization and participate in preparing a committee report to be presented to the entire membership.
4. Serve as chairperson for one meeting of our class organization.
5. Serve as secretary for one meeting of our class organization.
6. Serve as parliamentarian for one meeting of our class organization.
7. Serve as chairperson for a standing or special committee of the class organization.
8. Write a resolution in proper form, present it to the class organization, and give the opening speech in favor of its adoption.
9. Attend a student council meeting and write a short report on how parliamentary procedure was used.
10. Attend a city council meeting and critique the use of

parliamentary procedure that you observe.

11. Interview a person who frequently serves as a chairperson for meetings and find out how she or he relies on parliamentary procedure. Write a short summary or give a brief oral report of your findings.
12. Obtain a copy of the by-laws of an organization. Write a brief analysis of the purpose served by these specific rules.
13. Write a short story, parable, or fable that illustrates how a group of people (organization, family, imaginary society) encounter difficulties by *disregarding* one of the underlying principles of parliamentary process (for example, the rights of minorities to be heard, or only discussing one issue at a time).
14. Get together with one to four other students and, after having your basic idea approved by the instructor, create a skit, mural, slide show, cartoon strip, board game, crossword puzzle, and so on that dramatizes or reinforces the principles from this unit. Share it with the entire class.

Questions for your consideration:

1. Critics of content grading state that higher grades are based only on the achievement of a greater quantity of work. What response to this criticism would you give? How could you alter a Scout Handbook contract to award higher grades on more than just quantity of work?
2. What preparation do you feel students would need to be able to successfully complete a Scout Handbook contract? Do you feel all students are able to work independently enough to make wise choices?
3. How could you help students to choose the additional activities most beneficial to them?
4. For which topics do you feel a Scout Handbook system can best be implemented?
5. Refer to a more complicated example of a Scout Handbook contract in the article entitled "Contract Grading in the Interpersonal Communication Course" by Cassandra L. Book in *The Speech Teacher* (Vol. 24, March 1975), pp. 133–138.

Point System Contract

The point system is often used in speech communication courses in which students must receive a minimum number of points in a variety of topic areas by completing assignments of their choice. Variable points can be awarded for assignments completed (as in the following sample

contract) or a set number of points can be awarded for a completed assignment. Potential points for each assignment (or each factor within an assignment) should reflect the teacher's judgment of the relative values in terms of value as a learning experience, complexity and difficulty of task, and investment of time and effort required. The weighting of assignment options differentiates the point system contract from the Scout Handbook and the grade-option-only contracts.

Consider the following sample point system contract and the related questions.

Sample Contract Using Point System for Public Speaking

(This is not a model unit but only a sample format for a variable point system contract.)

Each speaking assignment is worth a minimum to maximum number of points. Upon fulfilling the specific requirements of each assignment, the minimum number of points will be awarded. In addition, the speaker may receive one point for each of the following: introduction, conclusion, organization, supporting material, vocal qualities, eye contact, gestures, enthusiasm, audience adaptation, and overall effect. (The instructor may predetermine that some of these factors be given additional weight.) The instructor will determine effectiveness for each of these factors, and thus award the appropriate number of points.

To receive a "C" on this unit, you must accumulate at least 50 points.

To receive a "B" on this unit, you must accumulate at least 75 points.

To receive an "A" on this unit, you must accumulate at least 100 points.

[The instructor may create any number of assignments incorporating a combination of factors that she or he thinks are important. Various factors may include: type of speech (for example, informative, persuasive, entertaining, speech of introduction, eulogy, "how to" speech); length of speech; number of references; style of delivery; supporting material (for example, analogy, statistics, story); types of reasoning; type of organization; outline; use of emotional appeal, attention arresting devices, and visual aids; speech on specific topics; and so on.]

Samples:

The student will introduce another speaker. The introduction must include the speaker's name, occupation, notable personal information, and an interesting bit of knowledge about the speaker, if possible relating the speaker to his or her topic. Only one note card may be used. The introduction may be from 1 to 3 minutes in length. 1–10 pts.

The student will give an introductory speech about herself or himself that includes information about personal hobbies, goals in life, most influential event in his or her life, and so on. No notes may be used. The speech may be from 1 to 3 minutes in length. 1–10 pts.

The student will give a speech to inform on a topic of his or her choice. A minimum of three outside sources must be cited in the speech, and the speech must show evidence of adaptation to the audience. A maximum of three note cards may be used in delivery. The speech may be from 3 to 5 minutes in length. An outline must be given to the instructor on the day the speech is delivered. 5–15 pts.

The student will have the class role-play a particular audience in any time period or location. The student will then deliver a persuasive speech using Monroe's motivated sequence. The speech must have an effective attention-getting device and use at least three different types of supporting material. An outline and audience analysis (at least one page) must be handed in before the speech is delivered. The speech must be from 5 to 7 minutes in length. Any style of delivery may be used. 15–25 pts.

The student will deliver a speech on an abstract concept (for example, democracy, love, impatience) using at least two types of reasoning. The speech should illustrate the meaning of that concept for the person. The speech may be from 5 to 7 minutes in length and may be delivered from manuscript of extemporaneously. 15–25 pts.

The student will deliver a speech to a group consisting of at least ten people outside the class setting. The speech may be on any topic to accomplish whatever purpose is appropriate for the occasion. The speech must be at least five minutes in length. An outline and audience analysis must be handed in to the instructor (and the instructor should be invited to the speech!). 30–40 pts.

Additional assignments must be created to provide appropriate options that realistically allow students to accumulate the points necessary to receive various grade options within the time frame of the unit.

Questions for your consideration:

1. The point system requires foresight as to how many points students can reasonably acquire. How many assignments would a beginning speech student have to complete to receive an "A" using the above contract? What factors must be considered in determining a reasonable number of points for each assignment and for grades awarded?
2. Take a topic area that you teach and assign point values to the

assignments within the unit, based on the difficulty of each assignment. How many points would have to be acquired to meet your minimum for passing? Do you prefer to give variable points for the assignments? On what basis do you award variable points for the work completed?

3. For what topics do you think a point system contract can best be implemented? In a public speaking unit, it can be difficult to allow students the opportunity to redo speeches or to do the number of speeches needed to receive the desired grade. How can that problem of scheduling be overcome? It is a problem for other types of courses or only for oral performance courses?
4. A decision must be made regarding the awarding of points if a student has failed to meet the minimum standards for an assignment. For example, if the student attempts to deliver a speech on an abstract concept, but actually speaks on his or her job at McDonalds, should the teacher award any points? The 15-point minimum? Or should the teacher tell the student what is needed to redo the speech in order to correctly meet the minimum standards?

Case Studies

The following situations may be presented to students who have already been introduced to contract grading. Since the situations are ones that you and the students may face in using contracts, it should be worthwhile to discuss them with the students to make them conscious both of the problems the teacher can face in maintaining the contract and the responsibilities they have in fulfilling commitments. After all, since two major advantages of contract grading are teaching students to be responsible and to set realistic goals, engaging them in such discussions should impress on them the nature of their involvement.

1. Mark signed a contract to complete a "B," but always waits until the very last possible moment to hand in his assignments. His teacher has noticed that his work is continually of poor quality and suspects it is due to his hurried preparation. On his last major assignment, Mark had several excuses why he would have to hand in his project two days late.
   a. What should the teacher do? Should she or he give Mark an extension? Should she or he fail Mark because he has not fulfilled the contract?
   b. Should the teacher accept Mark's late project if the excuses are valid? On what basis are excuses judged valid? Would you want to have to judge a student's excuses to determine the extension of a contract?

c. Should Mark renegotiate for a lower grade since he has turned in poor quality work?
d. When should the teacher talk with Mark about his work and the grade he desires?

2. Susan just can't accept the fact that in a contract system of grading the teacher is committed to awarding the grade contracted for if the work is satisfactorily completed. Susan is used to getting low grades and then blaming the teacher for not liking her.
   a. What can Susan's teacher do to help Susan accept responsibility for her own work and resulting grade?
   b. How can Susan's teacher build trust between them so that Susan will know she will get the grade she works for? Would doing each assignment on such a criterion-referenced system help Susan to see that she receives grades for fulfilling specified assignments, not on the basis of competing with other students on a norm-referenced or curve system?
   c. How could Susan's peers influence her in accepting the contract grading system?
   d. Is it possible or probable that some students will not be able to work under a contract? How should a teacher determine a student's ability to work under a contract system?
3. Bradley became frustrated with the contract system because he had to show a minimum competence on each assignment and could not average grades on several assignments to receive a final grade.
   a. What are the advantages of Bradley demonstrating minimum competence in each area rather than excelling in some areas while failing others to arrive at an average grade?
   b. What do you see as the purpose of learning? To achieve mastery? To demonstrate competence? To receive a grade?
   c. How many times should Bradley be able to redo an assignment or retake tests?
4. Scott, a varsity basketball player, contracted for an "A" in the unit but is unable to complete the research paper needed for an "A" because of State finals. Should he be allowed to renegotiate for a "B"?

   Amy thought she was uninterested in the area of mass media and contracted for a "C." Upon exploring the topic further, she became enthusiastic about several aspects of mass

media. Should she be allowed to renegotiate for an "A"?

a. Under what conditions should students be allowed to renegotiate their contracts? Should Scott and Amy be allowed to renegotiate their contracts? Why or why not?
b. What advantages are to be gained by allowing students to renegotiate contracts? How can this procedure help them to view their abilities, time commitments, and priorities more realistically?
c. Should the teacher initiate renegotiation if he or she sees that a student has fallen behind in the work or feels that a student is capable of doing more work?
d. In what way is the renegotiation of contracts parallel to the business world or other life experiences?

5. Stephen is an advanced student who easily handles the work assigned. His communication teacher is experimenting with contract grading but realizes the contract may be too easy for Stephen, yet challenging for the other students.

a. Should Stephen merely fulfill the contract designed by the teacher, even if it does not challenge him? Or should Stephen be encouraged to create his own contract that would challenge him more?
b. Is it the responsibility of Stephen, the teacher, or both to suggest that Stephen create a new contract?
c. Is it bad for students not to work up to their full potential? Why or why not?
d. If a contract is too easy or too difficult, what input could students have in redeveloping the contract for future use?

6. The teacher presents a contract for one assignment to the class. One step reads: "Failure to meet all requirements drops the grade one level for each requirement not met." Several students get an idea and start passing the word, "Go for an 'A'—why not start at the top? If you don't make it, maybe you'll get a 'B.' "

a. Do you agree with their philosophy? Is this an inappropriate attitude?
b. Should the teacher discourage this attitude? If so, how? If not, why not?
c. If there is a run on a grade (for example, everyone contracts for an "A") should the teacher have individual conferences with students?
d. Should a student who could not easily or realistically get an "A" be discouraged from trying?

Activities

1. Lead a discussion with students regarding factors that affect their decision-making on commitments they choose to fulfill. Discuss the following questions in general and then reconsider each question for such tasks as babysitting, playing on the football team, working for a grade, and working for a paid job.
   a. How do you weigh the time it will take you to complete the task? How do you handle time conflicts between the task and other things you want to do?
   b. How does your knowledge of what the task entails affect your decision? Are you willing to try tasks that are novel to you, or are you more willing to do things you already know how to do?
   c. How influenced are you to do a task if you know you can work on it with friends? Are you more likely to do something if you can complete the task with others, or if you work alone?
   d. Are you more willing to tackle a task if it is in a competitive or a noncompetitive situation?
   e. If you see that the task applies to your future goals, are you more likely to do it?
   f. Under what conditions will you leave a task unfinished?
   g. What motivates you to work hard and to do your best?
   h. Are you more motivated to work when you receive praise or recognition for the job than when you do not receive it?
2. Give students contract and have them create a checklist for the assignments required for each grade. Use the checklist from the informative speech contract (page 6) as a sample.
3. After students have experienced working on contracts, divide the class into groups of five to eight students. Given the same general area (for example, oral interpretation), have each group create a contract that includes assignments and criteria, grade levels, and timetables for completion. Have each group complete the contract they created after it is approved by the teacher, or have representatives of each group negotiate a compromise contract for the whole class. The products should be general enough to be useable in the future.
4. Given a series of assignments in a particular unit, have students designate point values for the assignments and create what they feel would be a fair contract for each grade level. If you involve students in the planning of the contract, they will understand it better and be more committed both to the idea of working on a contract basis and to fulfilling the specific

assignments. If it is difficult for them to envision the assignments because of a lack of familiarity with the material, you could have students create a contract from assignments they have already completed on a previous unit in order to help them understand how contracts are designed.

5. Give students three sample papers, speeches, or taped programs that have been created to fulfill a particular assignment. Have students evaluate each assignment in light of the established criteria. Discuss the procedure for creating criteria, communicating it to students, and assessing whether or not assignments fulfill the criteria. This activity should help students to understand what is meant by meeting objective criteria, differentiate between high quality and low quality work, and be able to create criteria for contracts that they create individually.
6. After students have experienced contract grading, have them list the requirements they would like included or excluded from the contracts and provide a rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of each requirement. Have students consider such requirements as attendance, efficient use of class and library time, meeting deadlines, and class participation.
7. Critique a Contract. Provide students with sample contracts. The students will assess the contract's value after an investigation of its content by using the following questions provided by the teacher.
    a. Are the objectives in the contract stated clearly?
    b. Are the methods to be employed by the students understandable enough for the students to complete the objectives?
    c. Does the contract specifically list the responsibilities of the students?
    d. Are there procedural steps or tasks outlined to help students complete the learning activity?
    e. Does the contract give provisions for applying and demonstrating the skills or content learned?
    f. Are the evaluation methods and criteria clearly stated for the students?
    g. Is the time allotted for fulfillment of the requirements within reason for the students' level? Are the deadlines within reason?

Evaluation of the assignment should be based on:

- written answers to the questions, to be handed in and graded according to specified criteria.
- discussion in class, using the questions provided by the teacher.

8. Establishing an Executive Contract. I devised the first variation of this contract in desperation, between the fall and spring semesters of 1968-1969. That was the season of the Asian flu, and many students had legitimate reasons for missing class on the days of their speech presentations. Others, however, seemed to take advantage of the flexibility I allowed by requesting make-up opportunities for speeches they had missed, simply because a certain class period was not a convenient time for them to speak. Class morale was low, and my temper was short because I was frequently forced into the judge's role of deciding which excuses were legitimate and which were not. By the end of the course we had to eliminate one entire round of speeches, yet there had been wasted days when only two students spoke and I desperately tried to fill in with a half-prepared lecture.

   By looking at the calendar for the next semester, I figured out how many days I would need for class orientation, making assignments, tests, lecturing, and conducting exercises for the entire group. These class periods were marked on the calendar as "my days" and were inviolable. The remaining class periods were labeled performance days and were allocated equally among four randomly assigned student scheduling groups.

   No more than six speeches could be scheduled for any class period. I occasionally allowed ten minutes on one of my days for the scheduling groups to confer. The results were amazing. On performance days I just arrived with my critique forms and said, "Well, group three, what's scheduled for today?" The students worked out their own systems of trading slots among groups, of assigning standby speakers for emergencies so that slots weren't wasted, and of disciplining students who were repeatedly inconsiderate of others in the group. The system had the advantages of (1) helping students appreciate the complexity of scheduling limited class time, (2) encouraging students to take responsibility for making and keeping their commitments to the course, (3) allowing considerable flexibility in suiting assignments to the students' convenience and learning styles (some students scheduled all their speeches as early as possible and freed their energies for other classes at the end of the semester; other, more reticent students valued the chance to sit out a round or two before giving their first speech), and (4) providing a valuable exercise in intragroup and intergroup communication.

   In the years since 1969 I have tried several variations on this system, as have my student teachers and colleagues. If five

speeches are required for a course, each student might ideally be given seven speaking slots. (Pass around a sign up sheet allowing every person a first choice before anyone gets a econd choice, and so on, or create a master schedule by number, rotating early and late positions in each round, undesirable days before vacation, and so on, and then let each student draw a number.) Other variations include changing slots to minutes and allowing students to sign up for longer and shorter assignments (always build critique time into such a system) or designating assignments as half-slot, one-slot, or two-slot speeches. To avoid complete chaos, these last two modifications should be used when full class days are assigned to groups. A fairly elaborate variation based on assigning speech slots to groups allows considerable class time for group practice sessions. In effect, each student auditions before the small group and is awarded a slot before the full audience when the group judges that the speech reaches criterion level. Another variation allocates most of the speaking slots to individuals (for instance, enough time for each student to fulfill his or her contract with one extra slot for make-up) and then gives the rest of the slots to a committee for allocation to those students who justify their need for additional time.

In a high school setting, it is recommended that the teacher schedule some emergency time in his or her days to compensate students whose time was pre-empted by unscheduled assemblies, shortened periods, fire drills, and the like.

The Activity

a. The contract governing course work is set by the teacher, or the teacher and students, and is discussed so that it is fully understood by all.
b. The teacher provides a list of the specific class periods allocated for performance assignments.
c. The teacher announces any other guidelines that must govern the executive contract, such as the maximum number of speeches per day, and so on. The teacher may also choose to explain a few of the systems mentioned above as possible models.
d. The students are given one or two class periods to devise and implement an executive contract governing scheduling of speeches and other ground rules regarding make-ups, point penalties for violations, and so on. They may use whatever problem-solving format they choose. The final contract should be signed by all students and the teacher.

9. Adapting an Individual Learning Exercise to Contract Grading: The "Library Research Scavenger Hunt"

   Preparation

   a. Prepare and administer a pretest to determine the level of research ability of each student (that is, to distinguish those students not familiar with *Readers' Guide* from those able to use abstracts).
   b. Prepare individual cards with questions for different levels. Here is a sample:

> You are doing a persuasive speech on airline travel. You are trying to convince your audience that flying is the safest way to travel, but you need statistics to back up your ideas.
>
> 1. Check two sources for airline disasters from January, 1973, to present.
> 2. State the name of the two sources.
> 3. Give the page numbers you found information on.
> 4. How many people died in airline accidents in 1975? Compare the figures from both sources.
> 5. Which has the most accurate listing? Explain.

   c. After the teacher has presented information on research techniques, students come to the library and complete "scavenger cards" during the class period. Students receive higher level cards as their skills increase.

   The Contract

   a. What steps would you follow to adapt this assignment to contract grading?
   b. Keep the following considerations in mind: skill level at outset, degree of difficulty, quantity of cards, and type of contract suitable (grade-option-only, point system, and so on).

10. Adapting the Radio Evaluation Sheets to Contract Grading. Contracts can serve many purposes; they are workable even on small assignments or tests.

    a. Take the following checklist designed for testing competence on radio equipment and formulate a contract. *See:* Radio Equipment 60-Second Check, p. 29. *Or,*
    b. Take the following critique sheets: Commercial Critique, Blocked Script Critique, and Crew Evaluation. Present them to the class prior to due date. Ask for student input on adapting the requirements to contract grading.

Sample:
Commercial Critique "A" = 7 areas of excellence
2 areas for improvement
"B" = 5 areas of excellence
4 areas for improvement
or, each item would have a certain point value with a point system used for the contract.

Radio Equipment 60-Second Check

Name: _____ Grade: _____

(Due to the number of steps the student must accomplish in such a short time, this checklist is phrased to pinpoint areas the student has altered or deleted in the process.)

___ 1. Did not push in silver button
___ 2. Did not flip key switch to ready
___ 3. Did not work with the correct channel (for example, chose C and turned the A pots up)
___ 4. Did not turn up correct pot
___ 5. Did not turn up one of the pots
___ 6. Did not make correct patch
___ 7. Did not program room, or programmed wrong room
___ 8. Did not turn on power for gates board
___ 9. Did not turn up master pot on gates board
___ 10. Did not check monitor pot on gates board
___ 11. Did not check key switch for Mic #1
___ 12. Did not flip key switch on gates to "P"
___ 13. Did not turn up pot on gates
___ 14. Did not take a level
___ 15. Did not take a correct level
___ 16. Did not watch VU meter while taking a level
___ 17. Spoke too close to microphone
___ 18. Spoke too far from microphone
___ 19. Did not push out silver button
___ 20. Did not perform steps in organized sequence
___ 21. Went _____ seconds beyond time limit
___ 22. Made too many errors or needed too much assistance to pass. Redo!

Extra Microphone Test

___ 1. Did not make correct patch for PA microphone
___ 2. Did not check key switch for extra microphone
___ 3. Did not use correct pot for extra microphone

Commercial Critique

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Areas for Improvement

____ 1. Did not write a commercial long enough to fill 60 seconds
____ 2. Final draft not prepared on due date
____ 3. Introduction could be improved–it did not gain attention
____ 4. Introduction used a question
____ 5. Ideas or wording–too technical or complex
____ 6. Ideas seemed to lack originality
____ 7. Some ideas were inappropriate or in poor taste
____ 8. Could use more descriptive words and images
____ 9. Could relate to audience's senses or experiences more
____ 10. Could repeat product's name more often
____ 11. A slogan could enhance commercial
____ 12. Poor grammar or spelling
____ 13. Cushion not included at end of commercial

Other Comments:

Areas of Excellence

____ 1. Commercial long enough to fill 60 seconds
____ 2. Final draft and blocking prepared by due date!
____ 3. Introduction gained attention immediately
____ 4. Ideas or words were appropriate for commercial
____ 5. Creative ideas
____ 6. Good use of descriptive words
____ 7. Related to audience's senses or experiences well
____ 8. Repeated product's name often for effectiveness
____ 9. Good use of catchy slogan
____ 10. Good cushion written at end of commercial

Other Comments:

Blocked Script Critique

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Areas for Improvement

____ 1. Did not have a 2 inch left-hand margin (margin too small or too large)
____ 2. Did not print or type script
____ 3. Did not have double space if printed or triple space if typed
____ 4. Script was printed on backside of paper
____ 5. Did not have a copy for the director
____ 6. Director's copy was not blocked
____ 7. Did not underline words to be stressed
____ 8. Punctuation marks (/ or //) were not included
____ 9. Punctuation marks (/ or //) were placed incorrectly
____ 10. Marks were not included or placed incorrectly
____ 11. Time notations were not in left-hand margin
____ 12. Time notations were incorrect
____ 13. Cushion was not properly marked
____ 14. One cushion was not included (omit cushion) (add cushion)
____ 15. Script could be neater

Other Comments:

Areas of Excellence

____ 1. Left-hand margin around 2 inches
____ 2. Script was double or triple spaced appropriately
____ 3. Script was neatly printed or typed
____ 4. Script was printed on only 1 side of the paper
____ 5. Script was attached to construction paper or cardboard
____ 6. Director's copy was made
____ 7. Script was fully blocked for the director
____ 8. Words or phrases to be stressed were underlined
____ 9. Punctuation marks (/ or //) were marked correctly
____ 10. Marks were included
____ 11. Time notations were identified correctly
____ 12. Both cushions were included
____ 13. Cushions were marked correctly
____ 14. Script was neat!

Crew Evaluation

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Director

____ Did you make sure everyone was in their crew position
____ Did not find a replacement for an absent crew member (you must tell me who the replacement is)
____ Did not secure a script from the talent
____ Did not give proper cues before air
____ Did not give speed up or stretch cues when necessary
____ Did not pay attention to the A.D.
____ Did not get the show "On" or "Off the Air". . . on the nose!
____ Excellent ____ Good ____ Satisfactory ____ Poor

Assistant Director

____ Was not in crew position on time
____ Did not give proper time cues before air
____ Did not give proper time cues during air
____ Did not speak loudly and clearly enough for the director
____ Excellent ____ Good ____ Satisfactory ____ Poor

Control Board Operator

____ Was not in crew position on time
____ Made an incorrect patch
____ Did not set up the board properly
____ Did not tell the director when level was correct
____ Did not get a correct level, or ride gain during commercial
____ Excellent ____ Good ____ Satisfactory ____ Poor

Floor Manager

____ Was not in crew position on time
____ Did not adequately get quiet in the studio
____ Did not give the correct cues or hand signals
____ Did not make sure the talent saw the cues
____ Hand signals were l x and not exaggerated enough
____ Excellent ____ Good ____ Satisfactory ____ Poor

Critic Position: 1st ____ 2nd ____ 3rd ____

Due to four positions being performed simultaneously during the one minute preparation time and one minute air time, this checklist is phrased so that the evaluator only identifies the areas needing improvement.

11. Using Contracts for Individual Problems. Using the following information, write a sample contract for Alan. His record from the teacher's record book:

Unit 1	1st speech	D	
	Assignment	E	(E given for Midterm)
	Exam	E	
Unit 2	Library research: skipped class		
	2nd speech	E	Also poor
	Assignment	E	attendance
Unit 3	Contracted unit		
	Speech content	C-	
	Speech delivery	C-	
	Assignment	D-	

It is near the end of the semester and Alan, a senior, is in trouble. Speech is required for graduation, and he has failed it once previously. The counselor approaches the teacher about Alan's progress.

a. Is a special contract appropriate for Alan?
b. If so, who should be involved in creating the contract: teacher alone, teacher and student, counselors, parents, other students?
c. What criteria should be used?

Compare and contrast your contract with a sample given a high school senior. (See Speech Contract p. 35)

12. Student Written Contracts: Delivery

Previous steps

First speech:

a. Delivery sheet handed out to students with contract set.
b. Discussion about criteria ensues.
c. Informal speaking activities follow.
d. Delivery of first speech evaluated by teacher and students.

Delivery evaluation sheet: Scale 1–10. Students rank themselves–fill in squares based on:

a. teacher evaluation of previous speech
b. student evaluation
c. self-evaluation

Delivery oriented activity: based on scales (see handout)

a. Students hand the teacher a note card with two areas of strength and two areas of weakness listed.

b. Impromptu speeches or class discussion on controversial material can be used as a practice assignment. During these activities, students are able to focus on areas of their concern in delivery (for example, practice making eye contact with audience).
c. Teacher and student evaluate his or her work. Can the student move up on the scale after the activity? Are his or her perceptions of strengths accurate?

Student Oriented Contract.

Students submit a contract to the teacher regarding their specific needs in delivery of a speech. The minimum acceptable competence level is a "5" on all areas of delivery for completion of contract.

Example: A = Improvement in 5 categories (from level 5 to 7 in loudness, from level 4 to 6 in final impression, and so on)

Questions

a. What are some identifiable problems when students write this type of contract?
b. Should the teacher set the number of squares of movement and students select personal areas, or should the student be allowed to make an individual decision on all areas?
c. What happens if teacher and student disagree on criteria or levels? Does the teacher have the final decision?
d. What about the unmotivated student who doesn't really want to improve delivery or is not interested in creating his or her own contract? Should the teacher make the contract optional? Should the teacher have available sample formats or optional formats, if anything?

Delivery contract alternative

Students are given the "Stages of Delivery" handout. By the end of the course, each student must improve at least one level above the delivery stage of his or her first speech.

For a "C," the student must reach stage 3.
For a "B," the student must reach stage 4.
For an "A," the student must reach stage 5.

Alan Fairfax 124 Beginning Speech Communication May 20, 1977

Requirements for Passing 124 Speech

1. No further absences or tardies.
   (Excused tardy slips from counseling office, and so on, will not be honored)
2. Any excused absences must be excused by a phone call from his parent.
   (Office Hours – 5th and 7th period, 12:00–12:45 and 2:00–3:00)
3. Make-up Work
   a. Redo first speech . . . . . May 25, Wednesday
   b. Take first unit test, pass with "D" or higher . . . . May 25, Wednesday
   c. Complete first written assignment – "D" or higher . . . . May 27, Friday
   d. Research, organize and deliver the biographical or demonstrative speech (present to class for credit) . . May 31, Tuesday

   Note: For make-up work, the "F" will remain on the record for the first nine weeks, but work must be made up for credit.
4. Successfully complete radio drama with group (all work deadlines must be met).
5. Alan must take and pass the final examination.

Failure to meet any of the above requirements will mean failure in the 124 Beginning Speech Communication class.

_____
Alan Fairfax

_____
Mrs. Kreger

Delivery Evaluation

Speaker: _____

\+ = effective - = meets basic requirements 0 = not sufficient

____ Initial Impression
walks confidently, collects thoughts, establishes eye contact, then begins

____ Loudness of Voice
appropriate loudness so everyone can hear

____ Pitch
has variety of inflection in presentation

____ Quality
energy and mood of voice

____ Rate
appropriate speed of your voice so that we can easily grasp and comprehend ideas

____ Rate
uses pause effectively

____ Eye Contact
gains attention and establishes contact during introduction and conclusion

____ Eye Contact
includes all of the audience for at least 50% of speech and does not read note cards word for word

____ Facial Expression
Body Language
corresponds to the quality of your voice

____ Movement
uses purposeful gestures without nervous habits

____ Visual Aids
incorporates visual aids without disturbing the flow of speech

____ Adapting to Feedback
analyzes audience while speaking and adapts appropriately

Comments:

Evaluator: _____

C = no more than 4 "0" and at least 2 "+"
B = no more than 3 "0" and at least 5 "+"
A = no more than 1 "0" and at least 7 "+"

Name _____

Delivery Evaluation

	Low 1	2	3	Basic 4	Average 5	Good 6	7	Consistent 8	9	Effective 10
Initial Impression										
Loudness										
Pitch (inflection)										
Rate										
Rate (pause)										
Eye Contact (beginning + end)										
Eye Contact (general)										
Facial Expression + Posture										
Movement (gestures)										
* Spontaneity										
Adapting to Feedback										
Visual Aid Use										
* Final Impression										

Low = rarely used – needs attention
Basic = sometimes used, but shaky
Average = used with special concentration (50–60%)
Good = used most of the time (still needs special attention – not stable)
Consistent = used most of the time – a natural habit
Effective = polished, a strength

Stages of Delivery

Stage 1: Delivery less effective than in regular conversation. This may seem silly, but many people pick up distracting mannerisms in a public speaking situation that they do not have in everyday speech. If you are at this stage for more than one speech, you should definitely see me for special help.

Stage 2: Delivery at least as effective as in everyday speech.

Stage 3: Significant progress in eliminating your most distracting mannerisms. Freedom from notes. Eye contact through most of speech. Voice audible at all times. Articulation and phrasing clear enough that no phrases of your speech are lost. Few vocalized pauses. Free from serious grammatical errors.

Stage 4: No really distracting mannerisms left. Vocal inflection and facial expression related to the meaning of the speech. Natural gestures and movement. More or less constant eye contact with entire audience. A lively sense of communication. You must appear to like your audience, like speaking and be enthusiastic about your subject.

Stage 5: Hold attention throughout the speech. Maintain poise before, during, and after the speech. Lectern and notes never used as a crutch. Vocal and facial expression used to reinforce the ideas of the speech. Smooth and pleasing movement and gestures. Acceptable diction, pronunciation and word choice. Articulation clear enough that no words are lost. At this stage we should get a definite feeling that your delivery is projecting your personality into the speaking situation, and there should be great interaction with the audience in terms of responding to feedback. Total impression of your delivery at this stage is that people listening to you would say, "That's a *good* speaker."

Stage 6: Fluent, virtually no vocalized pauses. A sense of timing, dramatic pauses, movement, and so on, used to elicit audience response. Effective use of language, figures of speech, repetition and variety of sentence structure. Tone, pitch, volume, and physical movement are not only consistent with content but varied enough to add a dimension to your speech. At this stage you should be in command of your audience. We should get a definite feeling that you are using your voice and physical activity to set a mood and to stimulate emotional responses from your audience. But, of course, this must seem natural and spontaneous.

Stage 7: Spellbinding! I find myself having difficulty finding any suggestions for improvement. (I'll find them, but it's hard.)

These are general categories. Obviously, each of you will not fit clearly into one of these at each point in the semester. They represent both general descriptions and specific prerequisites. You may have most of

the characteristics of a stage 6 speaker, but make so many serious grammatical errors that my general reaction to your overall effectiveness is the same as to people in stage 3. I will try to be specific about what you need to do to move into the next stage of delivery. However, whenever you are confused about why you are placed at a certain level or what you need to do to move beyond it, the best thing to do is to make an appointment to meet with me in my office.

Footnotes

1. Ann Harvey, "Student Contracts: A Break in the Grading Game," *Education Canada*, 11–12 (September, 1972), 41.

2. James Stewart and Jack Shank, "Student-Teacher Contracting: A Vehicle for Individualizing Instruction," *Audiovisual Instruction*, 18 (January, 1973), 32.

3. Jo Sprague, "Evaluation: Problems in Evaluating Speech Communication Performance," paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention in San Francisco, California, December 1971.

4. Thomas King, "A Contract Approach to a Public Speaking Course," *Speech Teacher*, 21 (March, 1972), 143–144; Brian Holleran, "The Use of Performance Options in Speech Courses," *Today's Speech*, 20 (March, 1973), 27–29.

5. David Stern, "A Flow-Chart Approach to Public Speaking on the Contract Plan," *Today's Speech*, 20 (Winter, 1972), 25–26.

6. Bloom's taxonomy of learning in the cognitive domain provides a system for classifying educational objectives that emphasizes intellectual and problem-solving tasks. The six levels of cognitive behaviors include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. For additional information on the taxonomy, see B.S. Bloom, ed., *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook I, The Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay, 1956).

7. Stewart and Shank, "Student-Teacher Contracting," pp. 32–34.

8. Jo Sprague, "Cognitive Aspects and Teaching for Mastery in Teacher Education in Speech Communication," *New Horizons for Teacher Education in Speech Communication*, P. Judson Newcombe and R.R. Allen, eds. (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Company, 1974).

9. James H. Block, ed., *Mastery Learning Theory and Practice* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971).

10. Andrew D. Wolvin and Darlyn R. Wolvin, "Contract Grading in Speech Communication: Administrative Implications," *Association for Communication Administration Bulletin*, (August, 1975), 43.

A. Ann Guscio, "Student Contracts for Reading and Writing," *Measure for Measure*, Allen Berger and Blanche Hope Smith, eds. (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1972), 23.

11. Mary-Jeannette Smythe, Robert J. Kibler, and Patricia W. Hutchings, "A Comparison of Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced Measurement with Implications for Communication Instruction," *Speech Teacher* (January, 1973), 1–17.

12. "Grade Inflation," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 6, 1974, p. 6; "Grade Inflation," *U.S. News and World Report*, July 1, 1974, p. 49; "Too Many A's," *Time*, November 11, 1974, p. 106.

13. Joel R. Butler and Robert M. Tipton, "Rating Stability Shown After Feedback of Prior Ratings of Instruction," *Improving College and University Teaching* (Spring, 1976), 111–113.

C.M. Garverick and H.D. Carter, "Instructor Ratings and Expected Grades," *California Journal of Education Research*, 13 (1962), 218–221.

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